

## REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated September 24, 2003 (Paper No. 23). Claims 66, 68 and 70 are in the application, all of which are independent claims, and all of which have been amended. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, Claims 66, 68 and 70 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) over U.S. Patent No. 6,324,521 (Shiota). Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

The present invention generally concerns providing a plurality of services over a network. A request for printing an image stored on the network is transmitted by a user terminal to a service center. The service center stores items and their prices in a first table, and a plurality of service providers and at least one item included in each printing type provided by the plurality of service providers in a second table. The service center calculates a charge related to the request on the basis of referring to the first and second tables, and sends a notification of the charge from the service center to the user terminal. A request from the user terminal is forwarded to one of the plurality of service providers via the network automatically upon receipt by the service center of an instruction from the user terminal of whether to print, wherein the instruction is responsive to the notification sent to the user terminal concerning the charge. One of the plurality of service providers performs printing of the image according to the request received from the service center.

Referring specifically to claim language, independent Claim 66 defines a method of providing a plurality of services over a network. The method comprises the

steps of transmitting, by a user terminal, a request for printing an image stored on the network to a service center, storing, by the service center, items and their prices in a first table, and storing, by the service center, a plurality of service providers and at least one item included in each printing type provided by the plurality of service providers, in a second table. The service center calculates a charge related to the request on the basis of referring to the first and second tables, and a notification of the charge is sent from the service center to the user terminal. The request from the user terminal is forwarded to one of the plurality of service providers via the network automatically upon receipt by the service center of an instruction from the user terminal of whether to print, the instruction being responsive to the notification sent to the user terminal of the charge. One of the plurality of service providers performs printing of the image according to the request received from the service center.

In a similar manner, independent Claims 68 and 70 are define the invention in terms of a system and an apparatus, respectively.

Thus, among the many features of the invention, (i) a charge is calculated on the basis of referring to a first table, storing items and their prices, and a second table, storing the plurality of service providers and one or more items included in each printing type provided by the plurality of service providers, and (ii) a request is forwarded from a service center to one of a plurality of service providers via a network automatically upon receipt by the service center of an instruction of whether to print from a user terminal, based on the notification of the charge.

The applied reference is not seen to disclose or to suggest the features of the present invention. Specifically, the applied reference is not seen to provide for (i)

calculating a charge on the basis of referring to a first table, storing items and their prices, and a second table, storing the plurality of service providers and one or more items included in each printing type provided by the plurality of service providers, and (ii) forwarding a request from a service center to one of a plurality of service providers via a network automatically upon receipt by the service center of an instruction of whether to print from a user terminal, based on the notification of the charge.

Shiota discloses a network photographic service, in which a service center selects and assigns a laboratory for printing an ordered printer in response to a request from a user via a network, so that printing processing can be carried out by the laboratory specified by the customer instead of the service center. See Shiota, Abstract; col. 7, ll 3 to 45; and Figure 1. Without citing any particular passage of Shiota, page 3 of the Office Action alleges that Shiota discloses the feature of sending a notification from the service center to the user terminal, the notification including a calculated charge, and forwarding the request from the service center to an appropriate service provider via the network automatically upon receipt by the service center of an instruction from the user terminal based on the calculated charge. Applicants respectfully disagree.

As described in lines 57 to 67 of column 8, lines 1 to 28 of column 9, and Figure 5 of Shiota, when the service center receives an order from a user, the service center is seen to assign a laboratory for outputting the ordered print based upon special equipment needs and customer delivery preferences, and is seen to immediately transfer the user's request for service to the laboratory based upon these criteria, without requesting further input from the user. While the service center does calculate a fee for the transaction, the fee is seen to be used to bill the client at a time after the requested service has already been

performed. See Shiota, col. 8, ll. 57 to 67; col. 9, ll. 1 to 28; and Figure 5. Moreover, Shiota is silent as to the basis for the calculation of charges.

Accordingly, based on the foregoing amendments and remarks, independent Claims 66, 68 and 70 are believed to be allowable over the applied reference. As such, the entire application is believed to be in condition for allowance and such action is respectfully requested of the Examiner's earliest convenience.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa, California office at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



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